

VZCZCXRO2493  
RR RUEHBC RUEHDBU RUEHDE RUEHFL RUEHKUK RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHMOS RUEHROV  
RUEHSR  
DE RUEHYE #0423/01 0851016  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
R 261016Z MAR 06  
FM AMEMBASSY YEREVAN  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 2773  
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE  
RUCNIRA/IRAN COLLECTIVE  
RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE  
RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORP

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 YEREVAN 000423

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EUR/CARC, EUR/SNEC

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/27/2016

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [AM](#)

SUBJECT: DAS BRYZA'S MEETING WITH NA SPEAKER BAGHDASARIAN

REF: 05 YEREVAN 1934

YEREVAN 00000423 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: CDA A.F. Godfrey for reasons 1.4 (b, d).

-----  
SUMMARY  
-----

¶1. (C) During his March 7-8 visit to Yerevan, Deputy Assistant Secretary for European and Eurasian Affairs Matthew Bryza pressed National Assembly Speaker Artur Baghdasarian to take a leadership role in developing Armenia's democratic institutions and urged Armenia to work with neighbors toward greater energy security. Baghdasarian thanked Bryza for USG democratization assistance, said he believed Armenia's national referendum on constitutional amendments fell well short of international standards, and threatened, as he has done before past elections, to pull his support from the ruling coalition if parliamentary (2007) and presidential (2008) elections are similarly flawed. Baghdasarian said he hoped to visit Washington for another round of official meetings "maybe in June." End Summary.

-----  
ARMENIA UNDER THE SHADOW OF A FLAWED REFERENDUM  
-----

¶2. (C) DAS Bryza met twice with NA Speaker Artur Baghdasarian, first (at the Speaker's request) informally in one of Yerevan's newest jazz clubs and later in a formal office call on March 8. Commenting that the GOAM was working "under the shadow" of a flawed constitutional referendum, Baghdasarian told Bryza that the Armenian National Assembly had undertaken an ambitious legislative agenda, including more than 70 bills, designed to reconcile Armenian law with the new constitutional amendments. Despite the shadow of the flawed elections, Baghdasarian said, "we have what we have" and the National Assembly "will move forward" on reforms. According to Baghdasarian, the legislation targeted reforms to local government and territorial administration, judicial and legal activities, elections administration, and human rights. All of these issues were related Bryza told Baghdasarian. Baghdasarian agreed and said he believed that a peaceful, prosperous, and free Armenia depended on regional cooperation.

-----  
"WE BELIEVE IN DEMOCRACY"  
-----

13. (C) Bryza noted US disappointment in the marred referendum, and encouraged Baghdasarian to work closely with the USG in strengthening democratic institutions in Armenia ahead of the 2007 parliamentary and 2008 presidential elections. Stability derived from legitimacy, Bryza said, and legitimacy required democracy. (Note: Baghdasarian told Bryza privately that he was considering pulling his support from the ruling coalition if parliamentary (2007) and presidential (2008) elections were "similarly flawed." End Note.) Bryza expressed concern that the GOAM's poor performance on good-governance and other Millennium Challenge eligibility indicators could result in suspension or termination of MCC funds. Baghdasarian responded by noting that the USG should send "clear messages about the MCC process" so that "everyone realizes that the U.S. is supporting democracy in Armenia."

-----  
"2006 IS A VERY IMPORTANT YEAR" FOR N-K NEGOTIATIONS ...  
-----

14. (C) Baghdasarian told Bryza that he saw the future of Armenia in good relations with its neighbors. If N-K negotiations failed to produce "agreements in principle" in 2006, the process would be delayed for four more years, he said, noting that national elections in 2007 (Armenia), 2008 (Armenia), and 2009 (Azerbaijan) would make concessions difficult for candidates and politicians, Armenian or Azeri. Despite the pressure of the elections' timeline, and despite Rambouillet, Baghdasarian said he remained optimistic about the N-K negotiations. "Frankly," he said, "I haven't lost hope, I think there will be some agreements this year in principle, but compromise will be important."

-----  
... AND FOR "OTHER REGIONAL CONFLICTS"  
-----

YEREVAN 00000423 002.2 OF 002

15. (C) Baghdasarian thanked the USG for "playing a great role" in working to establish relations between Turkey and Armenia. He said "a democratic Turkey striving for the EU is in Armenia's interest," and rhetorically commented, "There is a train taking Turkey to the EU, why are we standing on the tracks? We need to get on the train." (Note: Baghdasarian used the same comment during his October 18 meeting with A/S Fried (reftel). End Note.) Bryza noted that a democratic, conflict-free Caucasus is more attractive to outside investors, one more reason to work toward relations. (Note: Baghdasarian told Bryza that he had received a letter on March 7 from a Turkish Parliamentarian who said he wanted to visit Armenia to "talk about problems." Baghdasarian did not name the parliamentarian. End Note.)

16. (U) DAS Bryza has cleared this cable.  
GODFREY